GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS

Published Weekly by

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

(The National Geographic Society is a scientific and educational Society, wholly altruistic, incorporated under the Federal law as a non-commercial institution for the increase of geographic knowledge and its popular diffusion. General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.)

Contents for Week of December 21, 1936. Vol. XV. No. 24.

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NOTE TO TEACHERS—Because of the Christmas and the New Year's holidays, the GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS will not be published during the next week. The BULLETINS will be resumed Monday, January 4, 1937.

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BRINGING IN THE BOAR'S HEAD USHERS IN AN OXFORD CHRISTMAS

A unique English custom is that observed at the Christmas feast of Queen's College, Oxford. A boar's head, all dressed up for dinner with an apple in its mouth, is greeted with a special old carol in Latin and English. It commemorates the legend that a scholar once saved himself from a wild boar's attack by stuffing his book down the animal's throat (see Bulletin No. 2).

HOW TEACHERS MAY OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

The Geographic News Bulletins are published weekly throughout the school year (thirty issues) and will be mailed to teachers in the United States and its possessions for one year upon receipt of 25 cents (in stamps or money order); in Canada, 50 cents. Entered as second-class matter, January 27, 1922, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized February 9, 1922.

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Suiyuan Province, Where Genghis Khan Held Sway

IN CHINA'S remote Suiyuan Province, a part of Inner Mongolia, rumors of war and reports of clashes between roving military patrols are heard as Japanese and Chinese exchange threats and warnings. To the average student and newspaper reader, Suiyuan is a strange name until historians remind us that this is the land whence Genghis Khan, the powerful Mongol leader, once held sway over half the known world.

Even today the name of Genghis Khan is reverenced by the Mongols of Suiyuan, and his picture still may be seen in their felt tents. But Suiyuan itself, lying obscurely between the Great Wall of China and the forbidding Gobi Desert, is now little known to the outside world.

Farmer Versus Nomad

Lying at the point where Mongolia's vast arid plateau comes down to meet the more fertile lands of China proper, Suiyuan in recent years has been the scene of constant friction between two modes of life—the Chinese farmer, pioneering his way north to raise crops and build a settled home, and the Mongol nomad, pushed back by the gradual invasion of the grazing lands used by his flocks and herds, which are his life.

Shaped somewhat like Australia, but only the size of Arizona, Suiyuan lies inland directly west of Peiping and Tientsin. The Great Wall and the hills in its vicinity roughly form the province's eastern and southern borders, and through it in a great loop flows the Hwang Ho or Yellow River, "China's Sorrow," bringer of floods to lower China, but bringer of fertility to a strip of Suiyuan's dusty lowlands.

The Hwang Ho traces a thin belt of fertility and plentiful water through Suiyuan's center, but its loop of moisture encloses the sandy, arid Ordos Desert, which forms Suiyuan's southern extremity. Here crops can be grown only in scattered regions with the help of irrigation. Winds blowing down out of the Gobi roll its heavier sands into desolate dunes and carry its lighter silts through the air to spread on China proper south of the Great Wall.

Route of Ancient Caravan Trail

Along the Hwang Ho's fertile strip Chinese farmers raise their crops, and, too, they extend their holdings north some distance from the railroad that reaches out from Peiping to Kweihwa, Suiyuan's capital and important trading center. From Kweihwa northwest runs an ancient caravan trail to Outer Mongolia, climbing, only a few miles from the city, onto the Mongolian plateau and later traversing the great Gobi, famous for bandits, dust storms, and dinosaur eggs. On the plateau, where Chinese farmers have not penetrated, Mongol herdsmen still wander, constantly on the march to "pastures new," living much as they did when Ghengis Khan was in his glory 700 years ago.

Suiyuan, like the United States, has its "dust bowl." Some Chinese farmers have had to retreat before black storms that blew away and destroyed the fertile top soil on land that lost its protective grass covering when plowed. Wars, and a continued series of droughts and severe winters, also have taken their toll in recent years among the Chinese "pioneers."

Strangely, in this land of Buddhist Mongols, evidence recently has come to light that a Christian regime once ruled in a part of Suiyuan. Not far from the

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Photograph by A. W. Cutler

SICILY'S FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROL IS "SUNG" ON THE CERAMELLA

In Sicily, where the weather is generally mild enough for dancing in the streets on Christmas Eve, holiday music is led by the native bagpipe, or *ceramella*, and the mandolin. The Christmas piper, beginning his musical rounds a month before Christmas, visits every little wayside shrine in the neighborhood and plays before it the *pastorale di Gesw Bambino*, the shepherds' song of the Baby Jesus. In addition, he pays the same musical tribute at the little *presepios* displayed before each home and shop—miniature scenes of the Nativity arranged with toys on a wooden tray and surrounded by candles (Bulletin No. 2).

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Carols Mean "Merry Christmas" in Any Language

CHRISTMAS carols, already lilting from radio singers in key with the season, soon will add cheer to Christmas festivities throughout the world.

Carols in many languages, rising from cathedral and household, are almost universally a part of the Christmas holiday. Their jubilant music may have been composed by forgotten monks a millennium ago, or by Bach, Mendelssohn, or Handel within the past few hundred years. These sacred melodies alternate with boisterous Christmas folk songs as strolling musicians in many lands serenade their neighbors, or as families celebrate in church, castle, and cottage.

Songs Around Crib and Christmas Tree

In southern Europe family parties gather around the *presepio, crèche,* or crib, the miniature scene of the Nativity in which tiny figurines of shepherds, Wise Men, and animals are grouped around statuettes of the Holy Family. In northern countries families gather about the Christmas tree.

The practice of dancing in a ring around the *crèche* or the tree is a reminder that a singing procession around the church altar and its *crèche,* centuries ago, may have inspired the name "carol," which originally meant music for a ring-dance.

Santa Claus, during his aerial tour of the world, December 24, travels on a continuous "beam" of music in following twilight from east to west. Skimming low over little Polish villages, he might hear simple *kolendas* nearly a thousand years old, exulting over the birth of "this little Child dear" and offering presents from Poland—"red shoes, a fur-lined jacket, a goose with gravy, or a feather quilt." In Czechoslovakia Santa Claus may have occasion to chuckle at a carol of gay plans to go to Bethlehem and carry a pet quail and a pet cuckoo, with loud imitations of the calls of the birds, or a lullaby carol which ends in soft humming.

Star on a Fishing Pole

A star bobbing through the streets of southern Germany would attract Santa's attention to star-carols, sung in processions following a large gilt Star of Bethlehem suspended on a fishing line. He might hear *Der Tannenbaum* sung before the family Christmas tree, and many other carols which, like the Christmas tree custom, spread through the rest of Europe from Germany, many centuries before the religious leader Luther sang from house to house on Christmas Eves of his boyhood.

In Sweden families celebrate around trees decorated with hundreds of candles, gingerbread pigs, and shining ornaments. Old church anthems and giddy little carols are followed by the "Christmas polka," danced upstairs and down, the entire company joining hands in a kind of snake dance. To the church carol service before daylight on Christmas morning they ride by torchlight, tossing brands into a pile outside the church to make a jolly roaring bonfire.

Hurrying from there into Norway, Santa may arrive in time to find family after family dancing "ring-around-the-roses" about the Christmas tree, singing carols, many of which have the same music as those heard farther south. One, however, is distinctively Norwegian; it refers to the *Julenisse,* or Christmas gnome, in a red stocking-cap, who has so generously heaped presents around the tree, and it expresses the hope that he is enjoying the bowl of rice-porridge left for him in the barn.

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great Buddhist monastery of Peilingmiao in the interior, travelers have found a ruined city where stone slabs are carved with crosses, possibly the site of a settlement of Nestorian Christians of the 13th century.

Near Suiyuan's northeast border is Shangtu, now reported as a focal point of the Chinese-Japanese trouble. Once it was the fabulous Xanadu, from which Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis, ruled a domain extending from Indo-China to the Baltic Sea, and where, as Coleridge wrote:

"In Xanadu did Kublai Khan a stately pleasure-dome decree,
"Where Alph, the sacred river, ran, through caverns measureless to man,
"Down to a sunless sea."

Note: For additional references to Suiyuan Province, see: "Explorations in the Gobi Desert," *National Geographic Magazine*, June, 1933; "World's Greatest Overland Explorer," November, 1928; "By Coolie and Caravan Across Central Asia," October, 1927; "Road to Wang Ye Fu," February, 1926; "Thousand Miles Along the Great Wall of China," February, 1923.

Bulletin No. 1, December 21, 1936.

Photograph by Maynard Owen Williams

JAPAN AND CHINA BID FOR HER LANDS

When the Citroen-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition passed through Suiyuan during its epic crossing of Asia by tractor motor car in 1932, a call was made at the ceremonial yurt (tent) of Prince Hsi Ssu Nying. At the door of the yurt this beautifully dressed Mongol princess halted long enough for an informal picture with her retainers. In Mongolia, the brocade silk skirt and the Manchu cap (right), former features of official dress in China, are still worn by men.

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Burgos, Rebel Headquarters in Northern Spain

SPAIN is no longer unanimous about a seat of government. Two cities are proclaimed as capitals; Valencia (while Madrid is under siege) by the Loyalists, and Burgos by the Rebels. Foreign governments which have recognized the latter have sent their acknowledgments, for want of an official name, to "the Burgos régime."

Burgos, from which the operations of the Rebels are directed, rises from the heart of a rolling plateau that once embraced the northern kingdoms of Leon and Castile.

The city itself huddles around a low hill, crowned with the traditional ruined castle, and bordered by the Arlanzon River flowing at its feet. Everywhere the view is dominated by the sharp spires of the Cathedral (see illustration, next page). Across the river from the old town is a newer suburb, where small factories make woolen and leather goods and paper.

Once Resplendent with Pomp of Coronations and Royal Marriages

With a population of only about 32,000, Burgos does not rank as one of the major cities of the Iberian peninsula, but it is rich in history and in architectural treasures. Until 1087, when the royal residence was moved to Toledo, the city was the capital of Old Castile. In fact, it is hinted that the crumbling castle above the city is one of the main reasons for the name of Castile.

Even after the transfer of the royal residence, it was still the scene of much royal pomp, splendor, and treachery. Several kings were crowned there, and some were born within its walls. Perhaps Burgos' most notorious son was King Pedro the Cruel, who was reputed to decorate his rooms with the heads of his victims.

Columbus, returning from his second expedition to the fabled New World, was welcomed by Fernando and Isabella in that palatial residence of old Burgos, the Casa de Cordon. The building still spreads its stone front across one side of the Plaza de Libertad.

Royal marriages attracted to Burgos the pageantry of medieval chivalry from more than one nation. England sent a 12th-century princess there to become a Spanish queen, and later came an English king and a French duke to claim Spanish wives.

City Is Battle Scarred, but Now a Market Center

In Burgos was born El Cid, the national hero of Spain in the struggle to reconquer the country from the Moors. The hilltop castle, then a magnificent stronghold, was the scene of his marriage to Ximena, who is buried with him in the Cathedral. One of the town's saddest days was that of their hero's return, when all doors were closed by the jealous king's command, and the grieving populace had to do their hero-worshiping silently from their windows.

Remnants of warlike days survive in the city. The castle, demolished by the French after it had successfully resisted the forces of the mighty Wellington, flaunts its ruins from the hill. Four fortified gates remain, as well as a pleasant walkway, called the Paseo de los Cubos, the Promenade of the Tubs, because it passes a row of tublike circular bastions of the old wall.

Today, under ordinary circumstances, Burgos is a market center for a wide farming region, where irrigated fields form green patchwork along the valley of

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England may be sending up such a burst of song as to waft Santa's sleigh to a higher altitude. Church choirs, school children, and sometimes alms-seekers form the groups of waits who go "a-wassailing" from house to house, with or without reward. In the West Riding of Yorkshire carolling children carry "milly-boxes" (My Lady boxes) containing dolls representing the Virgin and Child. At Queen's College, Oxford, the unique Boar's Head Carol is still sung annually when a boar's head is served with Christmas dinner (see illustration, page 1).

Across the Channel, France is echoing with *noëls* in dozens of dialects. On Christmas Eve, children of Provence sing a separate carol for almost every *sainton*, the little painted pottery figures of the *crèche*, concluding with a prayer carol.

In Italy, too, the *crèche* is the center of Christmas music, both in cathedrals and homes. *Pifferai*, or Christmas pipers, come from the hills down to Rome in colorful costume, carrying rude instruments which resemble clarinets and bagpipes. They play folk tunes before each little shrine and crucifix along the streets, meanwhile receiving gifts for their zeal from passers-by (see illustration, page 2).

Note: See also "Where Bible Characters Live Again" (Oberammergau, Germany), *National Geographic Magazine*, December, 1935; "Between the Heather and the North Sea," February, 1933; "Oxford, Mother of Anglo-Saxon Learning," November, 1929; and "Celebrating Christmas on the Meuse," December, 1919.

Bulletin No. 2, December 21, 1936.

Photograph by W. Pfingstl

WHERE CHRISTMAS IS AT HOME THE WHOLE YEAR ROUND

Oberammergau, scene of the Bavarian Passion Play, is the year-round home of the actors in this famous religious drama, and here the characters in Christmas scenes actually participate annually in Christmas celebrations. The town's streets, when snow-covered, resemble animated scenes from Christmas cards, or the toy villages under Christmas trees. The church with its onion-shaped steeple is visited by Oberammergauers at midnight on Christmas Eve, and lighted Christmas trees shed their beams on graves in the churchyard.

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New Pacific Map Reveals Secrets of "Islands Nobody Knows"

PASSENGER service on the Pacific airlines, with a few days' flying between the United States and the Orient, opens a new act in the drama of trans-Pacific transportation.

The setting for this play is the world's largest ocean—almost seventy million square miles. That it is also the world's largest geographical unit of any variety has been revealed gradually within the past three centuries, as one bold character after another has drawn back the curtain a bit farther.

The most recent aid to popular knowledge of the Pacific, typical of this age when fabled mermaids and sea monsters are replaced on maps by accurate soundings and actual distances, is the new wall map published by the National Geographic Society as a special supplement to the December issue of the *National Geographic Magazine*. Representing several years of research and drafting, the single map shows more details in regard to the Pacific and its isles than many atlases, and more than any other map.

Capable of Submerging Entire Land Area of the Earth

The curtain went up on the Pacfic drama proper when Balboa, silent on a peak in Darien, gazed on the ocean. Because the Spanish crossed the Panama isthmus from north to south to discover it, they called it the "Southern Ocean."

Later measurements revealed that, if all the land surface of the world were peeled off at sea level and the upper crust dropped into the Pacific Ocean, the waters would cover it and transform the earth into a whirling liquid surface.

The Pacific's great depths are also noted on the new map. The world's profoundest deep measures 35,400 feet from sunny surface to cold, lightless bottom east of Mindanao, in the Philippines. Mount Everest, removed to this pit, would form no island, for its peak would be under more than 5,000 feet of water.

These facts may frequently be lost sight of, because most maps center attention on land areas. But in The Society's new map, the Pacific occupies the center of the stage, with four continents fringing its edges.

Christmas Island's Key Number Is 25!

Act II in the Pacific drama would present pioneer voyages of discovery, blazing the way for trade routes. Act III, filled with thirst, wrecks, and exotic cargoes, chronicles the beginning of the Pacific's business career. Spanish galleons sailed annually between the Philippines and Mexico and Peru.

So vast is the ocean that to represent it on a map requires a scale small enough to eliminate most of its islands. Many of them would have to be microscopic dots. The Society's new representation is a master map with island dots named and numbered. This "core" is bordered with 73 small inset maps showing individual islands and important island groups on a large scale, numbered to correspond with the dots in their geographical location. Whether or not the cartographers had sentimental intentions, Christmas Island's key number is 25.

"Islands that nobody knows," heretofore mere pinpoints and names on the surface of the vast Pacific Ocean, are thus whisked out of the unknown and given definite geographic identities. Christmas Island, Wake, Midway, Niuafoo ("Tin Can"), Fanning, Pitcairn (of "Mutiny on the *Bounty*" fame), and scores of others that have meant merely glamorous question marks to most readers, are shown to

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the Arlanzon River. Much of the district surrounding the city is arid and barren, like parts of the tableland of Mexico. But where water is to be had, good crops grow—chiefly grains and chick peas. Burgos is the capital of the province of the same name, largely the home of hard-working farmers, shepherds, and foresters. Its location makes it an important railroad and highway junction.

At the outskirts of Burgos stands the convent of Las Huelgas, to which only noble women were admitted. Its abbess for 500 years ranked second only to the queen of Spain, and had power of life and death, "the gallows and the knife," over all who came within her jurisdiction.

Note: Additional photographs and references to Burgos will be found in: "Turbulent Spain," *National Geographic Magazine*, October, 1936; "A Palette from Spain," March, 1936; "On the Bypaths of Spain," March, 1929; and "Cathedrals of the Old and New World," July, 1922.

See also in the *Geographic News Bulletins:* "Montserrat, Spain's Monastery 'White House,' week of November 30, 1936; "Madrid, Spain's Stricken Heart," week of November 23, 1936; "El Escorial, Where Spain Buried Her Past Royalty," week of November 9, 1936; "Spain's Stormy History Recorded in Madrid's Prado Paintings," week of October 26, 1936.

Bulletin No. 3, December 21, 1936.

© *E. M. Newman*

IN BURGOS, THE VERY OLD HAS REMAINED TO GREET THE NEW

Today, over the cobblestones of this ancient capital of Castile, staff automobiles, supply trucks, tanks, and artillery wagons dispute the right of way with dogs, basket-laden donkeys, and stolid oxen and their carts. The Cathedral, which rises serenely above all this traffic confusion, is said to have been erected largely in nine years during the 13th century, but the next 300 years were spent in bringing it and its fifteen chapels to completion. The glass-encased balconies on the houses are distinctive features of the Burgos scene, for they help to cherish the sun's warmth during the raw winter months.

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Christmas Is Permanently on the Map

GEOGRAPHY has its own answer for "Is there a Santa Claus?" There is. Santa Claus, Indiana, is a hamlet of a few frame buildings and less than a hundred people, but it is national headquarters for one type of holiday observance. Each Yule season brings to it stacks of mail, parcels, letters, and cards, of which 99 per cent is promptly re-mailed with the intriguing postmark "Santa Claus."

Beyond a doubt the biggest man in this Hoosier town is Santa Claus himself. A 25-foot statue of him, complete with whiskers and bulging sack, is dedicated to the charitable old saint, in recognition that his Christmas gifts to the town have been name, fame, and seasonal prosperity.

Early settlers of this southern Indiana hamlet, seven or eight decades ago, took a fancy to the name of Santa Fe, but they couldn't use it because another town in the same State had it first. So they boldly christened their settlement with Claus as a last name instead of Fe.

Christmas Has Come To Stay—in U. S., Canada, South America, and Pacific

Similar holiday names dot the world map. Christmas is a favorite in the United States. This name gives a festive fillip to settlements, all small, in Florida, Kentucky, Maine, and Arizona. Christmas Cove in Maine is a summer resort. Launches chug regularly into its rock-guarded entrance, not far from Boothbay, where pleasant summering makes visitors forget that Christmas is ever coming, until they see the name of the post office.

Another Christmas Cove, far less cozy, is the small sheltered anchorage for boats in southern Chile, hardly more than an indentation in San Andres Bay, where homesick sealers can find respite from dangerous winds, but little cheer.

Christmas in Arizona, a little mining camp southeast of Phoenix near the Gila River, was named on December 25, 1902, for more reasons than one. Several decades previously, mining prospectors had staked out claims on its site, but were forced to move because the territory was within the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation. On Christmas Eve, 1902, two prospectors received word that reservation boundaries had just been changed. By traveling most of the night, they reached the valuable site and located copper claims on Christmas morning. Because of the date, and also because they expected the mines to "fill their stockings," they called the place Christmas.

Names Applied by Homesick Sailors to un-Christmasy Places

Canada also has a holiday item of two among its place names. Christmas Island, in Nova Scotia, within the island of Cape Breton, is a tiny dot close to the eastern shore of Great Bras d'Or, one of the three channels where the "Golden Arms" of the sea reach inland toward the magnificent salt lake of Bras d'Or. Less frequented is the neighboring shelter of Christmas Pond's sandy beach.

Does Christmas suggest polar snow and sleigh bells? A famous place, which is Christmas the whole year round, is a coral atoll in the middle of the Pacific, a realm of white sand, luxuriant coconut palms, transparent green lagoons, and lumbering tropical turtles, a few minutes above the Equator. The largest known coral atoll in the Pacific, Christmas Island has about 1200 acres of coconut groves under cultivation, producing tons of copra annually. It was named by Captain Cook, who spent Christmas week there in 1777.

Another spot which owes its name to this captain's holiday visit is Christmas

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have their quota of harbors, villages, mountains, hills, highways, and even streams. Wake Island is revealed as three islands roughly forming a V. Midway is two islands and a tiny islet. Lord Howe Island, source of most of the potted palms at weddings and receptions throughout the world, is a plump crescent.

Note: Some recent additions to the large wall map collection published by the National Geographic Society include:

Pacific Ocean	December, 1936	Asia	December, 1933
Canada	June, 1936	United States	May, 1933
World	December, 1935	Antarctic Regions	October, 1932
Africa	June, 1935	Travels of Geo. Washington	January, 1932
Caribbean Countries	December, 1934	Europe	December, 1929

These maps were published as free supplements in *National Geographic Magazines* of the dates given. Additional copies can be obtained from the Washington, D. C., headquarters of the National Geographic Society for 50 cents per copy on paper, or 75 cents on linen.

Bulletin No. 4, December 21, 1936.

Drawn by Albert H. Bumstead

A CLOSE-UP OF A PACIFIC "DOT" REVEALS AN AMAZING FORMATION

The Truk Islands, a part of the Japanese-mandated Caroline group, when put under the map maker's magnifying glass, become a world in miniature. Truk is only one of the 73 "enlargements" of obscure island groups on the National Geographic Society's new map of the Pacific. The map above was published 2½ years ago; since that time several of the islands and reefs have already been given different names.

Harbor, in Kerguelen Island of the South Indian Ocean. Anchoring here on December 25, 1776, Captain Cook christened the place in honor of the day, undaunted by the fact that a French discoverer had named it the Baie de l'Oiseau three years before. Here Cook's crew found grass for their cattle and fresh water, then killed a plentiful supply of penguins and seals. The harbor has since protected numerous whaling vessels from the squally weather that blows over Kerguelen Island, and to many the rock-walled anchorage at the northern extremity of the island has meant a day or two of comparative rest and security, if not of festivity.

The island of Myauk-Kaung, in the monsoon-swept Indian Ocean, 200 miles below the western tip of Java, is also called Christmas Island. This small wooded outpost of the Straits Settlement, only about 62 square miles in area, has about a thousand inhabitants, most of them Chinese coolies employed in the production of phosphate of lime.

South America too has holiday mementoes tucked away in its map. Among the dangerous maze of islands packed tightly around bleak Cape Horn and up the coast of Chile are Christmas Sound, Christmas Harbour, and Christmas Anchorage.

For geographical variety, other names associated with Christmas are also used. Yule Island lurks off the southeastern coast of British New Guinea, and Noel names an island off the Java coast. Nova Scotia has a little harbor by that same name, and Virginia and Missouri, as well, have Noel post offices.

Santa Claus by another name is far more popular geographically, for France has a half-dozen towns named St. Nicolas. St. Niklaus in Switzerland; St. Nicholas in Wales, England, Canada, Cuba, Greece, Haiti, and Java; São Nicolao in the Cape Verde Islands; San Nicolas in Tierra del Fuego; St. Nicolaas in Belgium—all attest a world-wide popularity of the genial saint who is the traditional patron of sailors and children. Even Florida, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania have adopted a St. Nicholas apiece.

Bulletin No. 5, December 21, 1936.

Photograph by Willard R. Culver

ALL QUIET ON THE SANTA CLAUS FRONT

But earlier in the season, heavy traffic in Santa Claus letters rolled over this southern Indiana road, which is the main street of Santa Claus town. The general store, which also houses the post office, has at least six hectic weeks a year handling truckloads of mail hauled over from the railroad five miles away.